

“Actions to Accelerate the Movement to the New Workforce Vision”

What's Ahead for Acquisition Education and Training?

Editor's Note: Chapter 3, “Increase Acquisition Workforce Education and Training,” reprinted here in its entirety, is an excerpt from Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen’s April 1 Report to the Congress, “Actions to Accelerate the Movement to the New Workforce Vision.”

3. Increase Acquisition Workforce Education and Training (Section 912(d) Questions 10, 13, and 14)

Why Change is Needed

The civilian and military professionals in the acquisition workforce are the linchpin of the DoD acquisition system. Their efforts ensure that the U.S. Armed Forces have adequate quantities of the most technically advanced and reliable equipment and systems in the world.

The Department continues to strive to transform the acquisition workforce in response to a rapidly changing acquisition environment in which the leading-edge technology is often found in the commercial marketplace; where changing roles are required for government in its interaction with industry; and where the advancement of commercial practices can be used in defense acquisition in order to increase performance of systems while lowering costs and time to field and support the equipment. Members of the DoD acquisition workforce must become:

- More managers and leaders, and less hands-on doers.
- More focused on systems engineering, and less focused on “black box” component design.
- More capable of making “business” judgments based on insightful understanding of industry operations and technological change, and less guided by rule-based thinking.

What DoD is Already Doing

Since 1989 the Department has reduced the acquisition workforce by 42 percent – over one quarter million people. DoD has done extensive process reengineering through various Acquisition Reform initiatives in order to operate effectively and efficiently in spite of reductions. However, infrastructure must continue to shrink if DoD is to afford modernization and readiness.

A solid foundation for the education of the workforce has been established under the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA). The Defense Acquisition University (DAU), using its consortium of schools, has established 81 courses with over 1,200 offerings, educating approximately 35,000 members of the workforce per year. The material in these courses is work performance-specific and incorporates all of the Department Acquisition Reform initiatives. While our current system of technical acquisition training is highly effective, its dependence on classroom instruction brings a number of inefficiencies, such as time off the job, travel expense, and delivery delays can be inherent in system design. We must use distributed learning technologies to improve the affordability of our training system. DAU is accelerating its conversion of more than 50 percent of its curriculum to distributed learning through the use of an innovative web-based learning environment. This environment guides and supports students through the learning process. Instructors can track students’ progress and provide individual assistance as needed. Students are able to interact online with faculty and other students. This robust environment reduces time needed to acquire knowledge and skills for enhanced job performance. It also provides education and training better, faster, and cheaper to the larger, acquisition-related workforce.

Since 1995, the DoD has conducted training programs through the use of satellite broadcasts. These satellite broadcasts have proven to be an effective means to provide timely and accurate information to the DoD workforce and the Department's industry partners about how DoD is changing the way it acquires needed goods and services. These sessions are video-taped and are available from the Acquisition Reform Communications Center (ARCC) to enable continuous education and training to the expanded acquisition-related workforce in DoD, other government agencies, and industry.

The first Acquisition Reform Day was held on May 31, 1996, with the objective of communicating the message of Acquisition Reform. A second event was conducted in March 1997 and emphasized the implementation of Acquisition Reform initiatives. A third event is planned for the week of May 4, 1998, with the theme of leading and embracing change. These communications, education, and training events have proven to be effective tools in achieving needed cultural change.

On May 29, 1996, the Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition & Technology) established the Civilian Career Development program. This program is an opportunity for Acquisition & Technology career civilian staff members to seek out and complete developmental assignments in government or industry.

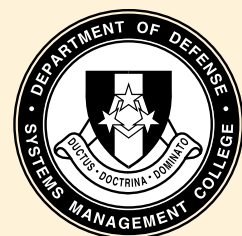
In the Fiscal Year 1996 National Defense Authorization Act, Congress provided for a civilian acquisition workforce demonstration project to determine the feasibility or desirability of proposals for improving the personnel management system. With the advances we have made in reforming the acquisition process, we believe this is an excellent opportunity to focus on reforming the civil service system that manages the people in the process. The workforce demonstration is a significant step in a systematic approach to develop a personnel management system that supports our new way of doing business. Immediately following enactment of the demonstration project authorization, the Department established a Process Action Team, made up of members from the Services and Defense Agencies, to work together with the unions, to develop a new personnel system. The Office of Personnel Management has approved the first of two *Federal Register* notices inviting public comment on the demonstration. The demonstration will begin after the end of the initial publication comment period, a public hearing, and the publication of the final *Federal Register* notice. The demonstration is expected to provide the personnel management tools necessary to conform the workforce to our transformation of acquisition systems and organizations.

Actions that Must Be Taken

3.1 Establish Training in Contracting for Services

Over the course of the last several years, DoD has focused its Acquisition Reform efforts on improving the acquisition of goods. As the Department moves into the 21st century, the amount of goods DoD buys will be reduced. DoD will increasingly adopt the commercial practice of purchasing services instead of things. This will require the Department to change significantly the way it thinks about, and actually acquires, services. To implement effectively these changes, DoD will need to train the entire acquisition workforce, and those who establish requirements, on this new focus. DoD will also have to develop tools to facilitate the change in behavior, and the structuring of the acquisitions themselves.

To implement this change, I will direct the Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition & Technology), the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staffs, and the Service Chiefs to establish a team to develop training and tools which focus on acquiring services. The training and tools will include guidance on purchasing services to meet warfighter needs.



3.2 Institutionalize Continuous Learning for Acquisition Professionals

The smaller acquisition workforce of the future must understand and interact effectively with the commercial sector, leverage best business practices and technological advances for continuing acquisition process improvement, and possess strong management and leadership competencies. Therefore, the Department must strengthen its education and training programs to ensure development of these workforce attributes.

To that end, I will direct the Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition & Technology) to complete the development of a reform-centered, continuous learning program that will supplement our well-established technical training curriculum for the acquisition workforce. The program should be designed to keep the workforce current with acquisition reforms, functional, and technical advances, and to improve its business knowledge and leadership competencies. Workforce standards should be strengthened to ensure development of a highly qualified, professional cadre of candidates for our most senior leadership positions. Major program elements, such as business education and leadership development, and program administrative elements should be competitively sourced to take advantage of best education and training practices in academic and commercial sectors. To minimize program infrastructure, distance learning delivery methods will be encouraged. The Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition & Technology) will coordinate the program with the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel & Readiness).

3.3 Enhance "Commercial Business Environment" Education and Training

DoD has traditionally relied upon in-house institutions, such as the Defense Acquisition University, for the majority of education and training for the acquisition workforce. That education and training has produced practitioners skilled in the way DoD has traditionally done business. The above actions will provide for enhancement of both the education and training within DoD institutions and will provide additional educational opportunities through such means as distance learning.

In addition to enhancing the training and educational offerings and opportunities at the Defense Acquisition University, it is also important that DoD recognize that a good portion of what the Department seeks to accomplish involves the introduction, into the DoD acquisition process, of those practices and techniques that, while commonplace in the commercial environment, will be new to the government arena. As such, DoD's education and training efforts must also include access to appropriate courses (either existing or designed specifically for the government acquisition workforce) at top business and other academic institutions, as well as new and innovative partnerships with the private sector, that can avail the acquisition workforce of additional and vital perspectives and training on key commercial practices.

I will direct the Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition & Technology) to develop a program specifically aimed at providing training on commercial business practices. The program will include market research, commercial pricing, commercial financing, commercial terms and conditions, joint ventures, etc.

3.4 Recruit, Develop, and Retain Technology Leaders

The expertise DoD needs at any point in time might very well reside in industry or academia, particularly in fields where the pace of technology change is rapid. It is often difficult to convince individuals in the private sector with such expertise to accept government positions primarily because of their resistance to becoming subject to the rules that make it difficult for senior DoD managers to go to work in the commercial sector upon leaving Defense.

In addition to increasing mobility between government and industry jobs, individual employees will be asked to be more geographically mobile in order to build the broad base of skills and experience that will be expected as in-house managers take on their new role, involving less doing and more managing. Most new members of the acquisition workforce should be given five-year renewable term appointments. This will allow for necessary turnover to refresh continually technology and management skills, and will provide incentives to maintain skills in the smaller workforce.

I will direct the Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition & Technology) to work with the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel & Readiness) to analyze the issues involved and to develop a legislative package that will detail ways to open the door between government and industry for high-technology skills, loosen the rules governing Intergovernmental Personnel Act employees, and promote the use of innovative hiring approaches that enable the rapid formation of renewable term contracts allowing an individual to return to industry after serving with DoD for four or five years, without impinging on the need for complete integrity in our acquisition and procurement decisions. There must also be an active program to provide the necessary incentives for the DoD to retain the individuals with the specialized skills needed by the government in the future information age.

3.5 Identify the Future Acquisition Workforce

Our experience with acquisition workforce formation and management under the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA), and our vision of future workforce composition and competency, provide important insights regarding needed improvements in workforce identification. As specified in the Department's report to the Congress in response to section 912(b) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1998, the defense acquisition workforce is defined as "the personnel component of the acquisition system."

In light of this definition, the Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition & Technology) is currently refining a workforce identification methodology that will include all personnel employed in acquisition occupations wherever they are located in DoD, plus those in acquisition support occupations if they are employed in certain organizations.* This approach to workforce identification will better represent the acquisition workforce, recognize degrees of involvement with the acquisition system, and improve workforce management and development. Certain conforming changes to DoD Instruction 5000.58 will need to be made as a result of this workforce identification effort

** There are various measures of the acquisition workforce: 1) DoD Instruction 5000.58, Acquisition Organizations, 355,299 people; 2) Pub.L. no. 101-50, Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act, 105,544 people; and 3) Jefferson Solutions Report, revised Packard Commission, 177,613 people.*

Impact on Acquisition Workforce

The initiatives described above will not result in major direct reductions in the acquisition workforce. In essence, the initiatives described in this section are "enablers" that will ensure that the future workforce has the experiences and competencies that will be required as we change the nature of the work that they are expected to perform.

Outcome

Improved education and training, and the adoption of new workforce skills, will increase the quality of the acquisition workforce allowing the use of new better, faster, and cheaper practices for acquiring goods and services.

Legislative Changes Under Review

Some of what is outlined above can be accomplished without legislative action. However, as DoD seeks to further its efforts to attract and retain high-quality technology and business leaders, a number of statutes will be reviewed, with any recommended changes being forwarded through the Office of Management and Budget to the Congress.

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